

DECONTAMINATION SYSTEM FOR MAIL AND OTHER ARTICLES

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This application claims the benefit, as a Continuation-In-Part application of US Patent Application Serial No. 10/280,950, filed October 25, 2002, and claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application Serial No. 60/401,715, filed August 7, 2002, U.S. Provisional Application Serial No. 60/416,917, filed October 8, 2002, and U.S. Provisional Application Serial No. 60/427,191, filed November 18, 2002, the disclosures of which are incorporated herein in their entireties by reference.

Background of the Invention

The present invention relates to decontamination of delivered items to be sorted, such as mail, where there exists a possibility that biological or chemical contaminants may be introduced along with the items to be sorted. It finds particular application in combination with a two-part decontamination system in which the bulk of the items are subjected to a systematic ethylene oxide decontamination process, while the mail determined to be unsuited to ethylene oxide sterilization are treated with a hydrogen peroxide vapor.

Mail sorting facilities, at corporations that are potential terrorist threats or which handle large volumes of mail, face the concern that a letter or package containing a hazardous material, such as a pathogenic bacteria or chemical agent, could enter the facility along with the regular mail. It has been found that mail